

**Partnering4Health**  
**Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Approach to**  
**Increasing Opportunities for Physical Activity Through Physical Education in Schools**

As part of the Partnering4Health project, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) selected three national organizations -- [the American Heart Association](#) (AHA), the [American Planning Association](#) (APA), and the [National WIC Association](#) (NWA) -- to work with 96 communities and address one or two priorities for improving their population’s health: improved access to healthy foods and beverages, more access to physical activity opportunities, more smoke-free environments, or improved access to clinical preventive services.

There is growing recognition that major public health problems will not be solved solely by individual actions and healthy choices, but by coming together to forge a society where healthy choices can be made more easily. Policy, systems and environmental (PSE) change represents a new way of thinking about how to effectively improve health in a community. PSE approaches seek to go beyond interventions focused on individual behavior to influence the systems that create the structures in which we work, live, and play. By changing laws and shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with little time and resources. By changing policies, systems, and/or the environment, communities can tackle health issues such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

*Policy, systems, and environmental change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members.*

Policy Change	Systems Change	Environmental Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policy change includes the passing of laws, ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules.</li> <li>▪ Policies greatly influence the choices we make in our lives. Laws that are passed (like workplace policies, school policies) greatly influence the daily decisions we make about our health.</li> <li>▪ Examples: Adding a tax on unhealthy food, passing a law allowing residents to plant community gardens in vacant lots, schools establishing a policy that prohibits junk food in school fundraising drives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ System change involves change made to the rules within an organization. Systems change and policy change often work hand-in-hand.</li> <li>▪ Systems change impacts all elements of an organization. Often systems change focuses on changing infrastructure within a school, park, worksite or health setting.</li> <li>▪ Examples: Creating a community plan to account for health impacts of new projects, creating a certification system for school bake sales to ensure they are in line with school wellness policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Environmental change is a change made to the physical environment.</li> <li>▪ Environmental change can be as simple as installing bike signage on already established bike routes or as complex as sidewalk installation and pedestrian friendly intersections to promote walking and biking among its citizens.</li> <li>▪ Examples: Municipality undertakes a planning process to ensure better pedestrian and bicycle access to main roads and parks; community development includes neighborhood corridors with pedestrian accommodations meeting the needs of seniors (e.g. adequate benches and ramped sidewalks).</li> </ul>

Adapted from Cook County Public Health: <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/cppw/pse%20change.pdf>

**Table 1: Priority Areas Communities Selected, by NGO**

Communities funded through the Partnering4Health project chose to work on one or more priority areas and focused their PSE approaches on a range of activities (Table 1). The social, cultural, physical, and economic foundations of a community

Strategy	AHA	APA	NWA
Healthy Foods & Beverages	30	21	32
Physical Activity	11	27	0
Smoke-free Environments	6	0	0
Clinical Linkages	0	0	32

support a healthy lifestyle for its citizens. For example, stairwells, bicycle paths, walking paths, exercise facilities, and swimming pools that are available, accessible, attractive and safe, may play a role in how much and the type of physical activity people engage in. Unfortunately, residents in some communities lack access to safe and enjoyable opportunities for physical activity. As a result, several of the funded communities chose to work on increasing physical activity by focusing on physical education in schools. Among these communities, 6 AHA communities chose to focus their PSE activities on increasing physical activity by focusing on physical education in schools.

The approach most often used by communities focused on physical education in schools was to

*The American Heart Association project in Beaverton, OR succeeded in getting all 33 schools in the city to implement 10 minutes of physical activity throughout the day.*

influence policies related to the frequency and duration of physical education. The American Heart Association’s initiative, [Oregon Kids Move with Heart](#) partnership, collaborated with Oregon’s Beaverton School District to increase physical education and activity throughout the day. The district created the Active Students Task Force to support implementation of the mandate and create innovative strategies for compliance. Through this collaborative partnership, evidence-based multimedia instructional tools and materials have been made available for teachers as a Physical Activity Toolkit.

Elementary schools participating in Beaverton School District’s Active Students Task Force pilot program are increasing physical activity by 50 minutes each week by beginning each school day with 10 minutes of activities from the toolkit, and middle schools are increasing activity by incorporating “Brain Boosts” throughout the day.

In addition to the toolkit, experts in the field of physical education and movement led professional development workshops for school staff. The American Heart Association and Beaverton School District are in collaboration to highlight successes in various local and state media. A local TV

news segment about the program is available at <http://koin.com/2015/08/31/beaverton-students-to-dance-every-morning/>



Figure 1. News segment about physical education and movement program in Beaverton, Oregon